

MEETING MINUTES

Kentucky Soil and Water Conservation Commission

Monday March 16, 2015 - 9:00 am

Two Hundred and Ninety-Third Meeting

In Attendance: Mr. John Denton, Chairman; Mr. Scotty Parsons; Mr. Danny Shipley; Mr. Billy Doolin; and Mr. Sanford Holbrook.

Others Present: Commissioner Steve Hohmann, DNR; Deputy Commissioner Sandy Gruzesky, DNR; Mr. Tom Karsner, Franklin County Conservation District; and Mr. Jack Kuhn, NRCS.

Also in attendance were Division of Conservation employees: Director Kim Richardson; Assistant Director Johnna McHugh; and Mr. Jeffrey Reed.

Quorum was met.

Meeting Called to Order - at 9:01 a.m. by Chairman John Denton.

SWCC Minutes From Last Meeting - February 10, 2015 - Motion to approve minutes was made by Mr. Sanford Holbrook. Motion seconded by Mr. Scotty Parsons. **Motion carried.**

Equipment Report - Assistant Director Johnna McHugh, DOC, presented the report with copies given.

Statement of Operations - Motion to accept the Statement of Operation report as presented was made by Mr. Danny Shipley. Motion seconded by Mr. Billy Doolin. **Motion carried.**

Approval of Equipment Loan Requests - The Taylor County Conservation District requested a loan for \$22,410.15, to be used for a John Deere 1590 10' Drill. Mr. Scotty Parsons motioned to approve this loan for Taylor County. Mr. Sanford Holbrook seconded the motion. **Motion carried.**

Approval of Infrastructure Loan Requests - There were no new loan requests.

Vacancy Petitions for Conservation District Supervisor's Appointments - Director Kim Richardson, DOC, presented the report with copies given.

Cumberland County - Jeff Pickens to serve the unexpired term of Finis Hardin (2016)

Bath County - Aaron Watson to serve the unexpired term of Jacqueline Watson (2016)

Whitley County - Jim D. Jones to serve the unexpired term of Barry Arnett (2016)

Fleming County - Randall Meadows to serve the unexpired term of Bill Grannis (2016)

Bullitt County - Hyte Rouse IV to serve the unexpired term of Hyte Rouse, Jr. (2016)

Motion to accept the vacancy petitions was made by Mr. Sanford Holbrook. Motion was seconded by Mr. Danny Shipley. **Motion carried.**

Incentive Pay for Supervisors

Taylor County

John McLean - KACD Convention; Supervisor ten-minute training

Sophia Adams - KACD Convention; Supervisor ten-minute training

David Cowherd - KACD Convention; Supervisor ten-minute training

Debbie Gabbert - KACD Convention; Spring Area Meeting

Marion Howard - Spring Area Meeting; Supervisor ten-minute training

Melvin D. Martin - KACD Convention; Spring Area Meeting

Barry Smith - KACD Convention; Supervisor ten-minute training

Motion to accept incentive pay for supervisors per diem was made by Mr. Sanford Holbrook. Motion seconded by Mr. Billy Doolin. **Motion carried.**

Agriculture District Program - Assistant Director Johnna McHugh, DOC, reported that due to Environmental Control Supervisor Mark Davis, DOC, being out of the office as a consequence of his selection for jury duty, there are no new petitions or re-certifications to be submitted for review at this time.

Discussion of Spring Area Meetings - Director Kim Richardson, DOC, presented the report. She began by giving an overview of the already held Spring Area Meetings. The Area 1 Meeting was down in attendance. This meeting, along with Area 2's, had to be rescheduled due to cancellations caused by severe winter weather so this may explain the lower turnout. Mr. Scotty Parsons stated he received several complaints concerning the inability to hear the speaker's presentations. Ms. Richardson made note of this and added that possibly the microphone was not turned up high enough. The Area 2 Meeting was very well attended. No new resolutions came from this meeting. Chairman John Denton stated he was unable to attend this meeting due to a previous medical appointment. The Area 3 Meeting report was given by Mr. Danny Shipley. A KACD election was held in which Mr. Bobbie Wilson was elected. It was a well-attended meeting with no new resolutions or other items of discussion to report. The Area 6 Meeting report was presented by Mr. Billy Doolin. Between fifty (50) and sixty (60) attended this year's meeting which was down a little from last year's numbers. Overall this was a good meeting with no new resolutions presented. The Area 7 Meeting report was presented by Ms. Richardson due to Mr. Jack Roberts not being attendance because of health issues regarding his wife. This was a well-attended meeting with between seventy-five (75) and eighty (80) on hand. A KACD election was held with the result being Mr. Rodney Dick will replace Mr. David Cowherd as the Area 7 Director. No new resolutions were presented.

Ms. Richardson gave the following dates for upcoming Area Meetings:

Area 9 will be Friday March 20th at Buckhorn

Area 8 will be Tuesday March 24th in Martin County

Area 5 will be Monday March 30th

Area 4 will be Thursday April 9th

Mr. Sanford Holbrook requested a list showing all supervisors who are eligible to be recognized for years of service. He stated that if the supervisors knew in advance who was to receive this recognition he felt that it would help increase attendance at the area meetings. Ms. Richardson noted the request and stated that the list could be generated. She added that those who have twenty-five (25) or more years of service are recognized at the convention.

Division of Conservation Report - Director Kim Richardson, DOC, presented the report beginning with a DOC budget update. Fiscal Year 2016 is looking decent for the division. DOC is currently in the process of hiring a new field representative who will be housed in the Perry County Conservation District. With this new hire, county responsibilities for each field rep will be shifted slightly with the goal being to have each of our reps more centrally located among the counties they serve.

Kentucky HB 510 update: This HB addresses how the extra funds from the Tobacco Phase I Master Settlement are to be allocated. During the General Assembly, which ended last Wednesday, the Senate wanted to add some additional capital projects to the bill, however, the House did not agree with the new proposals. A finalization for the bill has not yet been reached. This could possibly put \$5 million into the State Coast Share Program along with additional funding into the State Ag Development Fund and County Funds. If that amount is accurate in the final outcome of the bill then it would be \$1 million less that was allocated for FY 2015.

Direct Aid Discussion: Ms. Richardson reported that she has been covering, at all the area meetings, the changes that are coming to the allocation of Direct Aid funds. Ms. Richardson has made it clear during this educational process that these changes have not yet been approved by the commission. Ms. Richardson instructed all conservation districts who have concerns about the proposed changes to contact members of the commission. Assistant Director Johnna McHugh, DOC, gave a brief overview of these proposed changes beginning with the purpose for these modifications which is to make the Direct Aid process more transparent and more predictable. It will be based on a point system that looks at determining factors such as: each district offices ending balance for the year minus any "specific purpose" funds (example: monies for Cost Share; Ag Development; CAIP; Water Shed; etc.); districts with the least amount of money would receive more points; millage tax verses general funds (millage tax districts have a control over generating funds without any input from the Fiscal Court, therefore districts that rely on general funds would receive more points); more points would be given to districts who have more employees; and districts with more money in the bank at the end of the fiscal year would receive two thousand dollars (\$2,000) and districts with the least amount would receive fourteen thousand dollars (\$14,000). These figures, as presented, would leave a small amount of unused funding to be available as a cushion for those districts that may run into financial hardships/emergencies before the end of the fiscal year. Ms. McHugh added that under the proposed point system approximately half of the districts would receive more money and half less. Deputy Commissioner Sandy Gruzesky, DNR, asked how much of a dollar difference the biggest cut would equal, to which Ms. Richardson stated eight thousand dollars (\$8,000).

Mr. Tom Karsner, who serves on the Franklin County Conservation District Board of Supervisors, was on hand to discuss a letter his district submitted, copies were distributed, to voice concerns over the newly proposed changes. Mr. Karsner expressed concern over what seems like penalties (point deductions) assessed towards those districts who own their own offices and who have access to millage tax. In offering solutions Mr. Karsner indicated the willingness of the Franklin County District to share information and ideas with other district offices of what has worked best for them in petitioning their fiscal court, or to pay expenses for attendance to any classes that may be offered that addresses this issue. Mr. Karsner added that training of supervisors and board members is essential to assist the districts in effectively lobbying their local fiscal courts. He added this could possibly be a topic for a ten (10) minute training. He continued by saying it also helps to have a board member, farmer, etc. (someone with a knowledge of conservation issues) as a member of the fiscal court. Mr. Karsner stated that it takes a constant effort to maintain a working relationship with the courts and county judges due to changes brought about by elections for example. Ms. Richardson expressed her gratitude to the Franklin County District Office for their concern regarding this issue and taking the time to write the letter.

Mr. Billy Doolin in commenting on an earlier statement made by Mr. Karsner stated that he too had received calls from district offices who felt they were being penalized for being fiscally responsible. Mr. Doolin requested re-issuing an earlier report which lists the breakdown of county funding. Ms. Richardson told him this would be done and distributed. Mr. Sanford Holbrook interjected that perhaps the only fair solution would be to give equal funding, in the amount of seven thousand five hundred dollars (\$7,500), across the board, to all of the districts. In answering some of Mr. Holbrook's questions Ms. Richardson stated: Direct Aid Funds would be going out in July/August; currently no districts receive zero (0) dollars from Direct Aid; the smallest annual budget for any district office would be approximately twelve thousand dollars (\$12,000); and Direct Aid money comes from the General Fund. Currently each district goes through an application process in requesting Direct Aid funding, with some districts requesting up to one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000). Ms. Richardson stated that she would issue an e-mail today instructing the districts to continue submitting applications for Direct Aid until a final resolution is reached.

by the commission. In summing up the reason for these discussions Ms. Richardson stated that the goal for being transparent with Direct Aid Funding would ultimately be to help the commission in justifying to legislators the distribution of these funds since a set and specific list of criteria is much easier to explain and defend.

Mr. Sanford Holbrook suggested that since the topic of Direct Aid funding is of utmost importance, and due to many of the board members being absent, a vote should be delayed until a larger number of board members could be present. Mr. Holbrook suggested that a letter be sent out prior to the May meeting expressing the importance of the vote that will be taking place and the need for everyone who possibly can to be in attendance. Deputy Commissioner Sandy Gruzesky, DNR, reminded the board that due to Direct Aid funding being allocated in July/August a vote on this issue must be a top priority at the May meeting.

DOC is currently working on the Regional Conservation Partnership Program with NRCS, UK, KY Dairy Development Council, and the KY Beef Network. The State Cost Share Program will be leveraging to get some federal funding through EQIP to assist with this program. The groups are currently in the discussion phase of this project.

DOC is continuing to make the necessary changes, which began last year, to the State Cost Share Program to ensure that this program is fair and equitable in the distribution of funds thereby insuring that the money is getting where it is most needed.

The 2015 KACD Convention: The convention will take place July 19-21 at the University Plaza Holiday Inn in Bowling Green. Due to cost saving measures KACD will be changing up the format of this year's convention by ending the event earlier on Tuesday with a luncheon rather than later with a dinner. This will save the extra night's per diem the districts would have had to pay out. Also, a luncheon is much cheaper to host than a banquet dinner.

The KACD Board of Directors met last Tuesday, March 10th at the hotel in Bowling Green. The convention agenda was discussed with the following highlights. On Monday afternoon a Soil Health Forum will be presented. In December this forum was held in Princeton, KY and was very well attended with close to two hundred (200) farmers on hand to hear a panel of five (5) farmers discuss the best procedures for the implementation of cover crops in Kentucky. This will take the place of the majority of the usually held "break-out sessions." But for those who do not wish to attend the forum a few of these sessions will still be made available. A tour of Lee Robey's Dairy Farm will also be offered. Mr. Robey is the largest dairy farmer in Kentucky who has a lot of good conservation practices in place. The KACD has agreed to be a co-host for the Leopold Award which "recognizes agricultural landowners actively committed to a land ethic." The recipient of this honor will be awarded a ten thousand dollar (\$10,000) cash prize. While negotiations are still ongoing there is a possibility that this will be presented during the luncheon. Mr. Danny Shipley asked if it were possible to include in the convention agenda, a millage tax education session, to which Ms. Richardson affirmed that it could be added.

AWQA Appointment: At the commission's last meeting, which was held in conjunction with KACD on February 10th, an AWQA appointment was discussed. The commission however will not have to make that appointment at this time.

Assistant Director Johnna McHugh, DOC, reminded the board that at the last meeting she discussed bringing back the day long training sessions and asked all board members to be thinking of any issues/topics they would like to see incorporated in these sessions; i.e. what would you like for new supervisors to know? While this training is geared toward new supervisors it will still be made available to anyone who wishes to attend. Mr. Danny Shipley suggested a training explaining the various agency acronyms and the agencies they represent. Also, what exactly each agency represents and the range of their duties and responsibilities. He also suggested training on the topic of funding (i.e. - How are you funded? What are the possibilities for funding?).

Agency Reports

Natural Resources Conservation Service - The report was presented by Mr. Jack Kuhn. NRCS is currently busy with the Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWPP), working with many counties which have experienced recent flood damage. NRCS continues to find solutions in dealing with the recent changes brought about with the reorganization of the agency. Many district offices, in Eastern Kentucky specifically, no longer have an assigned district employee. Therefore many of the district office conservationists, soil conservationists, and district technicians will no longer be available. This of course places a burden

on the agency to come up with the EWPP required inspections. NRCS is looking at ways of using temporary inspection help to assist in filling this gap. They have agreed to pay 110% (employee's salary plus 10% administrative fee) for any district employee who is allowed to be used for this purpose. Training will be provided by NRCS for those who are interested.

Assistant Director Paulette Akers, Division of Compliance Assistance, has scheduled an Ag Environment Boot Camp for May 14, 2015, at the Department for Environmental Protection building located at 300 Fair Oaks Lane in Frankfort. This training will discuss the whole permitting process: the violations that occur; why they occur; and how to avoid them.

There were two (2) RCPP Projects that were awarded in Kentucky this year, one of which places NRCS in partnership with KY DOC. It focuses on outreach and education for nutrient management plans and Ag Water Quality Act compliance. NRCS and DOC are currently working on finalizing the memorandum of agreement.

NRCS, through the Mississippi River Basin Initiative, has been able to leverage several million dollars into the state for various watershed projects. NRCS will continue to work toward securing additional funding to assist Kentucky farmers and landowners.

Kentucky Department for Natural Resources - Deputy Commissioner Sandy Gruzesky stated she had nothing new to report.

Kentucky Department of Agriculture - Mr. Steve Kelly was not in attendance.

Agriculture Education/FFA State Advisor - Mr. Brandon Davis was not in attendance.

Farm Service Agency - Mr. John McCauley, State Executive Director, was not in attendance.

University of Kentucky Research Experiment Station - Dr. Steve Higgins was not in attendance.

Division of Forestry - Ms. Leah MacSwords, Director, was not in attendance.

KACDE - Ms. Leslie Fourqurean was not in attendance.

Next Board Meeting - The 2015 Meeting Schedule (meetings are held on the Third Monday of the month at 9:00 a.m.)

May 18, 2015

July 19, 2015 (KACD Convention)

September 21, 2015

November 16, 2015

Other Business

Director Kim Richardson, DOC, at the request of Mr. Sanford Holbrook, gave a brief overview of the Leopold Award which as stated earlier, is being co-hosted this year by KACD. Mr. Holbrook's inquiry is due to a comment that was made at the February 10th joint board meeting, by Mr. Steve Kelly, KY Department of Agriculture, in which Mr. Kelly stated that he did not foresee any problem with his department objecting should the SWCC decide to use a portion of the allotted cost share money for a one thousand dollar (\$1,000) donation to the Leopold Award Program. DOC has been annually receiving six hundred thousand dollars (\$600,000) from the Department of Agriculture, from pesticide registration fees, which is used to fund the State Cost Share Program. Ms. Richardson felt it important for the board to note that when the Leopold Award was initially presented to the KACD Board they were assured there would be no financial commitment or obligation on their part. While the Leopold Award is an outstanding program, many board members felt that State Cost Share money should be used for the environmental purposes for which it was earmarked and not for an award program; i.e. this is not a discretionary fund as seemed to be implied at the February meeting. Mr. Scotty Parsons felt a letter in writing from the Department of Agriculture would be an appropriate request, stating these funds may be solicited for such purposes, before a decision be reached. A vote was not taken at this time.

Adjournment - Motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Sanford Holbrook. Motion seconded by Mr. Billy Doolin. **Motion carried.**
Meeting adjourned at 10:17 a.m.